

**First Parish in Concord
Standing Committee Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2024**

Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Michael Beer	Standing Committee Member	Y
Lisa Bennett	Standing Committee Member	Y
Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd	Senior Minister (Interim)	Y
Jennifer Izzo	Clerk	Y
C.C. King	Standing Committee Member	Y
Gib Metcalf	Chair	Y
Caroline Washburn Minkin	Standing Committee Member	y
Jim Reynolds	Standing Committee Member	Y
Leah Russell	Treasurer	Y
Liz Rust	Standing Committee Member	Y
Susan See	Standing Committee Member	Y
Virginia Taylor	Standing Committee Member	Y
Tom Wilson	Congregant and Representative, Wright Tavern Legacy Trust	Y
Darien Smith	Congregant and Volunteer	Y

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM.

Leah Russell offered opening words.

Everyone checked in about how they are doing.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS REPORT

- Fifi Ball asked the SC if anyone has questions about her financial report that was distributed prior to the meeting.
- Caroline Minkin asked about the Gallo Estate funds, and the timing for receiving additional funds. Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd explained that he had conveyed a request from the First Parish

Legacy Trust to accelerate the timeline to make the first disbursement of the Gallo Estate funds. Gib added that the disbursement amount is currently set by the Trustees and has been 4%, but the Trustees are considering decreasing it to 3.5% because of the current market conditions. The 4% distribution is determined by a 3-year rolling average of the market trends to spread any ups and downs.

INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER REPORT

- The Standing Committee went into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters, and then came out of Executive Session.

Budget Overrun

- Approval to Cover Funds Already Expended. Because of some major unanticipated expenses, as of April 5th FP has exceeded our estimated annual budget in three primary line items:
 1. 6235 Facilities Repair: Budgeted at \$22,000, overspent by \$44,400 thus far (with more expenses expected). Reasons for the overage include the following:
 - Mold in the basement – mold was found in the basement where Milldam Nursery School operates that had to be abated. \$6,100
 - Heat issues in Parish Hall and Sanctuary – the heating systems did not work for a significant stretch of the fall, and the rental electric heaters and repairs combined together were expensive. \$16,800
 - Elevator repair – the elevator broke, had to be repaired, and then we had to pay to have it reinspected. \$8,500
 - Toilet and plumbing line issues – the toilets keep backing up, necessitating multiple trips from the plumber, and including a special and expensive scaling of our sewer line. Three power flush toilets have replaced the three standard ones. \$6,800
 2. 6110 Other Maintenance Staff (aka Assistant Sextons): Budgeted at \$8,200, overspent by \$4,400.
 3. 5740 Technology & Equipment : Budgeted at \$14,500, overspent by \$6,300. Reasons include: \$8,000 for email conversion from MS 365 to Google, with at least \$3,800 in additional expenses expected through June 30.
- Fifi and Seth asked the SC to approve the expenditure of \$48,800 to cover these budget overruns, using either surplus cash or the long term facilities maintenance account. They reported that they reviewed past actual expenses for prior years and concluded that this year has been unusual. There was only one other year in the past ten when we spent significantly more than \$20,000 on the Facilities Repair line item. Nine out of ten years we spent between \$16,700 and \$23,000 on this line item. Based on these past trends, Fifi and Seth concluded that we did not significantly underbudget for FY24. This year was an outlier.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the payment of \$48,800 from the surplus cash account to cover the budget overage incurred as of April 9, 2024.

Request for Additional Funds expected to be spent through June 30, 2024

- FP will continue to incur additional expenses between now and the end of the fiscal year. Given that we have already overspent our budget, Seth and Fifi requested that the Standing Committee approve now anticipated amounts needed for the remainder of the year. They requested approval of the following amounts:
 - 6235 Facilities Repair – \$3,500
 - 6190 Building Supplies – \$1,000
 - 6110 Other Maintenance Staff (aka Assistant Sextons) – \$3,200
 - 6225 Building Maintenance – \$1,000
 - 6230 Landscaping – \$2,500

- Total approval requested for additional expenditures through June 30, 2024: \$11,200

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the payment of \$11,200 from the surplus cash account to cover the anticipated additional expenditures through June 30, 2024.

Other Matters

- Seth mentioned that it's good that we brought in Rev. Elizabeth Ide to cover FP's pastoral care needs while Liz is out on medical leave because there is a pent up need in the congregation.

- Seth and the staff have noticed that the mood and spirit of the congregation appears more positive than it's been in the past. There is a lot more energy and excitement these days.

- Seth was approached by neighboring UU churches with a proposal for summer worship services. The idea is to do a rotation of summer services with other UU churches in the area. Each participating church would host Sunday worship a few times during the summer. Congregants would travel to the neighboring churches when it is that church's turn to host service. This idea would save money, and would foster a sense of community among UU churches in the area. The downside is that some Sundays in the summer there wouldn't be anything happening in the FP building, which could be perceived as unwelcoming. We would need to communicate well. During the off-weeks at FP, a volunteer could be stationed at the building to make sure it's not locked and to welcome any visitors. All of the churches will offer a Zoom option.

- Virginia asked for more information regarding Beth's comment in her monthly status report that FP should consider granting emeritus status to organist Eric Huenneke when he retires later this year. There wouldn't be any financial ramifications to such an action; it would simply be bestowing a title. Gib suggested that Beth come to the SC and make a formal proposal regarding this matter.

- Susan asked Seth to pass along a request to Amy Freedman, Minister of Religious Education, to provide more information about Religious Education in her monthly reports to the SC.

Pledge Campaign Report

- Leah reported that pledges are slowing down. We currently have 238 pledges. Last year we had a total of 313 pledges. We have currently raised \$633,000 against our budgetary goal of \$990,000. We know there is one large pledge coming soon that will get us closer, but we are still short. The pledge campaign team will try again to rally more support and pledges.

Wright Tavern Legacy Trust Trustee Selection Process and Nominations

- Tom Wilson visited the SC meeting to discuss a proposed procedure for selecting trustees for the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust. Going forward, the procedure would be that the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust identifies potential candidates to become trustees, and brings such candidates to the SC for approval.
- Gib suggested that the SC formally approve the proposed procedure for selecting new trustees for the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust and add the procedure to the SC's official written procedures.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the proposed process of selecting trustees for the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust and add such procedure to the Standing Committee's formal written policies.

- Tom proposed 2 names to serve as trustees for the Legacy Trust: (1) Oleg Litvinenko; and (2) Amy M. Riedel.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the appointment of Oleg Litvinenko to serve as trustee of the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the appointment of Amy M. Riedel to serve as trustee of the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust.

SC OPERATIONS

Special Congregational Meeting (May 5, 2024)

- The congregation will have a vote on May 5th to decide whether or not to call Rev. Jennifer Johnson to be FP's next settled minister.
- Darien Smith attended the SC meeting to raise the following questions regarding the special vote on May 5: (1) Do we want to offer an online component to the May 5th meeting? (2) Will we vote with an open voting process or secret ballot? (3) Will we allow early voting for people who don't attend the meeting?

- Historically, FP has utilized a secret ballot when voting for a new minister. The SC agreed that the vote regarding whether to call Rev. Jennifer Johnson as our next minister will be conducted via a secret ballot.
- The SC agreed that early voting on the question of whether to call Rev. Jennifer Johnson as the next settled minister will not be permitted, because doing so works against the ideals of fostering community, transparency and open communication.
- The SC agreed that the meeting on May 5th will include an online component for remote attendees.
- The SC discussed the logistics of having all SC members sign the meeting warrant.

Banners to Hang on the FP Building

- Rev. Paul Langston Daley requested approval to hang two new banners on the front of the building: (1) “Stand Up for Ellen” – an effort to get the Town of Concord to name a school after Ellen Garrison; and (2) a Democracy Festival banner to promote FP’s Democracy Festival. The “Stand Up for Ellen” banner would hang on the church building through the Concord Town meeting on April 29th. The Democracy Festival banner would hang until the Democracy Festival in June.
- In addition, Fred van Deusen with the Reclaim Our Democracy committee wishes to hang a “Reclaim our Democracy” banner on the front of the church. This banner would be displayed until the 2024 federal elections occur in November.
- FP currently has two banners displayed on the building: a Pride banner and a Black Lives Matter banner.
- The SC decided that it would not be appropriate for the church to display the “Stand Up for Ellen” banner because it pertains to municipal politics, when many FP members do not live in Concord.
- The SC decided to hang the Democracy Festival banner on the church building.
- The SC will revisit the request to hang the “Reclaim our Democracy” banner at a future meeting.

Governance Group – FP Bylaws Revisions

- The Governance Subcommittee drafted a new proposed version of the FP Bylaws to better align with our values and actual current practices. Since the SC last reviewed the draft Bylaws revisions in February, the Governance Subcommittee solicited feedback from the congregation and collected all comments. The new version of the Bylaws reflects many of the comments received.
- The SC generally approved the proposed revisions to the FP Bylaws, but Gib questioned the

proposed language in the second paragraph of Article 8 regarding calling meetings with less than 8 days' notice. The SC instructed the Governance Subcommittee to develop clearer language on the subject.

- The Governance Subcommittee will create a revised version and make it available for viewing by the congregation. The congregation will vote on the Bylaws at the annual meeting in June.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the revised version of the First Parish Bylaws to be brought forward to the Congregation for approval at the annual meeting in June, subject to the Governance Subcommittee clarifying the language regarding calling congregational meetings with less than 8 days prior notice.

Meeting Minutes

- Gib asked for a motion to approve the Standing Committee meeting minutes from March 12, 2024.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the Standing Committee meeting minutes from March 12, 2024, and to incorporate them into the permanent record.

Meetings and Events

- The SC will attend a special SC meeting on May 2 at 7:00pm in the Brooks Room to meet the settled minister candidate, Rev. Jennifer Johnson.
- The Annual Parish Meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2024.
- The SC agreed to move its regular monthly meeting for May from May 14 to May 7th. In addition, the SC scheduled a backup meeting on May 14th to discuss FP's budget if needed, and to approve the budget that will go before the congregation for a vote at the annual meeting in June.
- Fifi will prepare a proposed budget for the SC's consideration by May 3rd.
- The Senior Settled Minister Candidating week is coming up. The SC agreed that it would be good to have members of the SC attending the various meetings that Jennifer Johnson is having with the congregation that week.

Executive Session: The SC went into executive session.

- The SC voted to budget \$2000 to fund an event to honor and say goodbye to our Interim Minister, Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd. The funds will be paid for out of FP's "Miscellaneous Funds."

The SC meeting was adjourned at 8:40pm.